Concession to senior citizens in Himachal Pradesh

2440. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the scheme of concession in telephone rent granted to senior citizens in Delhi has been implemented in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in urban/rural/snowbound and far flung areas of both States, district-wise;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any survey has been conducted to find out the number of senior citizens having telephone in their names in telephone exchange-wise in both these States;

(d) if so, the results thereof; and

(e) if answer to part (a) above be in negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above

(e) Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) is providing telecom services in Delhi and Mumbai, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is providing telecom services in rest of India including Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

BSNL being an independent entity has its own commercial policies which are different from that of MTNL. In BSNL, senior citizens are registered in Non-OYT-Special category waiting list.

The monthly rent charged by BSNL from its subscribers varies from Rs. 50/- per month to Rs. 180/- per month depending upon the classification of area and capacity of the exchange system. The rent is substantially lower than that of MTNL in majority of cases. Besides this various alternate

tariff plans are available to suit the requirement of different category of subscribers including Senior Citizens, amongst which Sulabh Plan is the most economical and affordable wherein rentals are substantially lower and ranging from Rs. 75/- to Rs. 120/- per month. Other alternative tariff packages are also available to high calling subscribers.

Achievement in the e-connect projects

2441. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have held any talks on the e-connect projects with any countries during the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the official visits undertaken year-wise;

(d) what are the achievements so far; and

(e) the present status of core committees in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMED): (a) and (b) The Education & Research Network (ERNET), an autonomous society under Department of Information Technology, has been connected with PAN European Education Research Network-GEANT-on a 45 Mbps International Private Leased Circuit (IPLC) between India and Europe. The circuit is terminated on the Indian side at ERNET Point of Presence (PoP) at Mumbai and foreign PoP in Milan in Europe. The cost of the IPLC is being equally shared by Government of India and European Union.

(c) An official visit was made in the month of October, 2005, to discuss setting up of the connectivity between India and Europe.

(d) The connectivity between Europe and India is being utilized by Indian Scientists working in the field of high Energy Physics (HEP) to do collaborative research with their counterparts in Europe. The link will be in operation for three years with effect from August, 2006. Keeping in mind the requirements of Indian scientists, it is proposed to upgrade the bandwidth from 45 Mbps to 622 Mbps in the year 2007.

(e) There are no core committees for the project.